

UNIFORMED PROFESSIONAL FIRE FIGHTERS ASSOCIATION OF CONNECTICUT

AFFILIATED WITH INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF FIRE FIGHTERS

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Dear Senator DeFronzo, Representative Guerrera and members of the Transportation Committee,

My name is Paul J. Rapanault. I am the Director of Legislative and Political Affairs for the Uniformed Professional Fire Fighters Association of Connecticut. Our 4,000 members serve in 50 fire departments throughout the state.

I am addressing you today in **SUPPORT** of the aims of the following bills: **S.B. 741 AA PROVIDING A "MOVE OVER" LAW FOR CONNECTICUT, H.B. 5261 AA REQUIRING MOTOR VEHICLE OPERATORS TO CHANGE LANES WHEN APPROACHING AN EMERGENCY VEHICLE WITH ITS FLASHING LIGHTS IN OPERATION THAT IS STOPPED ON THE SHOULDER OR IN THE LANE OF A HIGHWAY, H.B. 5643 AA REQUIRING MOTOR VEHICLES TO "MOVE OVER", H.B. 5894 AA ESTABLISHING A "MOVE OVER" LAW IN CONNECTICUT, H.B. 6071 AA REQUIRING A "MOVE OVER" LAW IN CONNECTICUT AND H.B. 6225 AA ESTABLISHING A "MOVE OVER" LAW FOR MOTOR VEHICLES.** The Uniformed Professional Fire Fighters Association urges your committee's **SUPPORT** of the general objectives of these bills.

The number of fire fighters struck and killed by motor vehicles nationally has dramatically increased over the past 15 years. During one 5-year period between 1995 and 1999, 17 fire fighters were struck and killed by motorists. That represented an 89% increase in the number of line-of-duty deaths over the previous 5-year period between 1990 and 1994, when 9 fire fighters were struck and killed by motor vehicles. These incidents demonstrate that hazards to fire fighters are not limited to structural or wild land fires but encompass a growing number of incident types that fire departments respond to.

Motorists accustomed to a clear, unobstructed roadway may not recognize and avoid closed lanes or emergency workers on or near the roadway. In some cases, conditions and other drivers can reduce a motorist's ability to see and avoid fire fighters and apparatus. Weather, time of day, scene lighting, traffic speed and volume, road configuration and rubber-necking can all contribute to drivers approaching dangerously close to emergency personnel. These hazards are not limited to the fire service alone. Other emergency service providers such as law enforcement officers, Emergency Medical Technicians, and vehicle recovery personnel are also exposed to these hazards.

Areas such as reflective striping and chevrons, high-visibility paint, built-in passive light, and other reflectors have been studied to increase the public's awareness of the presence of emergency vehicles and personnel. But, to help safeguard fire fighters, law enforcement officers and emergency responders, Connecticut needs to pass a "Move Over Law."

The law should require drivers to shift lanes or slow down in order to provide a "safety zone" for fire apparatus, a police cruiser, ambulance or tow truck that is stopped on the side of a road with its warning lights flashing.

Drivers should be given two options for creating a safety zone:

1. If the road has more than one directional lane, like the Interstate, and you can switch lanes safely, drivers should be required to move over to vacate the lane closest to the emergency or other vehicle with its lights flashing.
2. If the road has a single directional lane or you can't safely move over, drivers should be required to reduce their speed.

Failure of motorists to move over is one of the reasons that motor vehicle crashes kill more law enforcement officers on duty than any other cause.

Massachusetts just passed their Move Over law in December 2008 which will go into effect in March 2009. Massachusetts is the 44th state to pass such legislation.

The list of states that continue to be without Move Over Laws – Rhode Island, Maryland, New Jersey, Nebraska, Hawaii AND UNFORTUNATELY, Connecticut. It is long overdue and time to pass this legislation.

Professional Fire Fighters urge your support for "Move Over" legislation.

Thank you for your consideration.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Paul J. Rapanault", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Paul J Rapanault
Legislative/Political Affairs